

Safe School Reopening Task Force Leadership Steering Committee
Aug. 13, 2-3 p.m.

Attendees: Adam Swinyard, Mark Anderson, Jerrall Haynes, Dr. Bob Lutz, Megan Read, Tricia Kannberg, Shawn Jordan, Dawn Sidell, Craig Numata, Phil Wright, Cindy Coleman, Salliejo Evers, Heather Bybee, Jennifer Keck, Oscar Harris, Gwen Harris, Becky Ramsey, Rebecca Powell, Jeremy Shay, Steve Fisk, Stephanie Busch, Michelle Jenner, Sabre Dahl, Kristy Mylroie. Not in attendance: Jeremy Ochse, Brad Reed, Katarina Kenlein.

Discussion: Dr. Mark Anderson welcomed everyone and outlined the day's agenda: Reopening plan implementation, Spokane Virtual Academy staffing, ADA Accommodations, and staffing reopening logistics.

Dr. Adam Swinyard thanked everyone for the incredible work that went into the reopening plan, approved by the school board on Wednesday evening, August 12. He acknowledged that not everyone agrees with the decision to start the year with distance learning, but that we focused on coming up with the best plan possible following the direction of health officials. He noted that we are heartbroken that we are not able to start the year with students learning in buildings, but we have to be able to do that safely. Every day, SPS is following hundreds of different safety guidelines and we cannot pick and choose which ones we adhere to. Our insurance provider, the Washington Schools Risk Management Pool (WSRMP), recently informed the District that if we did not follow recommendations from health officials, they would not cover COVID-related claims.

Dr. Swinyard also noted that we know that starting the year with distance learning will have a huge impact on families. Now, we must focus on putting our plan into place, with clear direction for each employee group. The plan is a living document, and we will need to adjust along the way. Three times a week, administrators are meeting about plan implementation, to build coherence and keep everyone on the same page. There is a vast number of details to work out in order to have a smooth roll out, and we're working to make things as clear as possible.

Last night, Dr. Anderson and Heather Bybee, Chief Academic Officer, presented the plan to the school board, which approved it as Resolution #20-15 along with a modified school year calendar that gives staff and students time to get trained on the tools they need for a successful year.

Heather Bybee explained that Aug. 31-Sept. 4 is a time for teachers to get up to speed on safety, social-emotional learning, digital tools, etc. Sept. 8-11 will be conferences with families. In the spring, families did not know what was expected of them. We want to connect one-on-one with them before school to make sure everyone's questions get answered. For elementary students, the conference will be with the classroom teacher. For secondary students, it will be with their advisory/home base teacher. In addition to

the conference that week, students will have activities that will help them transition to the official start of real-time distance learning Sept. 14.

Dr. Bob Lutz noted that Spokane's COVID incidence rate is about that same as it was last week. There is no clear-cut metric for when schools can safely return to in-person learning. But when they do, they should start with a calibrated approach, he said, noting the importance of continuing to work with Spokane Regional Health District. As school starts around the county, it will be telling as to what the future holds, he said.

Stephanie Busch, Director of Staffing and Operations in Human Resources, talked about next steps for staffing and enrollment. Staffing is usually the last week of August, but this year it was moved up to Aug. 17-21 to provide as much time as possible for making adjustments. The key components are enrollment projections and staffing adjustments. The process starts by getting up-to-date enrollments by grade level and building. A new component this year is to analyze data from the new Spokane Virtual Academy and On Track Academy @ Home enrollments. The deadline to sign up for those is Sunday, August 16, at 5 p.m. Currently about 1,200 students have signed up. With these data points, HR, Finance and school directors will meet with each building administrator to make any needed adjustments. They will also be keeping in mind the eventual return to in-person learning and the safety protocols that will need to be adhered to at that time. In the usual process, they will see if additional teachers are needed at a school, if teachers need to be moved to a different grade level, or if reductions are needed. This year, they will also be working with employees who responded in a survey that they wanted more information about the ADA process for alternative work (such as remote work or a job reassignment) or a leave. The deadline for that survey is also Sunday. So far there are about 2,000 responses from a possible total of about 3,600. Less than 10 percent of those responding have expressed interest in getting more information about the ADA process. HR will work with employees, matching them with a case manager who will help get employees the information they need to make the best decision for them and their family. Next, HR will work with building administrators to finalize staffing adjustments. Open positions due to enrollment increases or staff leave/ADA accommodations will be available for teachers at a fall involuntary transfer meeting. Minor staff adjustments will happen after the start of school, if needed.

In response to a question, Craig Numata, Budget Director, said that the A/B groups of 5th-12th graders that will need to be defined for a split schedule when we return to in-person learning will not be identified before the start of school, since adjustments may still need to happen. It will be better to start the year and get everyone settled in their class first. Dr. Swinyard mentioned that we will have different labels than "A" and "B" for the groups of students.

There are many rumors of "lots of people" planning to homeschool or start their kindergartener a year later, but no one can be sure how many people are actually going to do this. Dr. Swinyard said he has talked with many families from private schools who are interested in doing distance learning with SPS.

Registration for our new childcare option, SPS Day Camp, opens tomorrow, Friday, August 14th. Future communications to families will include information about school supplies and also clarify the start of school and what will happen during the week leading up to the start of distance learning.

Next steps are to submit the reopening plan to OSPI, finalize the MOU in discussions with Spokane Education Association, implement the reopening plan, and then school starts Sept. 8.

The next task force meeting will be Aug. 27 where we will discuss safety training plans for families, staff and students.